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2017 Undergraduate Research Symposium

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Art History Session 2: Persistent Symbols: Art and Meaning

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10:15-11:15 AM (ROOM 1306)

Art History Session 2: Persistent Symbols: Art and Meaning

Chair: Dr. Jared Benton, Art Department

Mining the Middle Paleolithic: The Emergence of Early Neanderthal Art

Kerry Kilburn (Mentor: Dr. Jared T. Benton)

An increasing body of evidence supports the conclusion that Neanderthals were not only capable of, but actively engaged in a wide range of symbolic and artistic activities. This evidence begs important questions, including whether or not such behavior was independently developed in Neanderthals and anatomically modern humans or inherited from a common ancestor, and why, if Neanderthals were capable of the same kinds of art-making as were anatomically modern humans, they never seem to have developed representational forms of art. The answers to these questions may lie in the deep history of hominid symbol-making and Neanderthal ecology and demographics, respectively.

Do you see what I see? Titian's *Poesie* and the Visual Polemics on Religion

Holli Turner (Mentor: Dr. Anne H. Muraoka)

The Venetian painter Titian is widely known for his *poesie*—visual representations of classical poems and literature. Scholars have largely focused on his unique interpretation of these mythological stories and his bravura handling of his brush. This paper argues, however, that Titian's *poesie* for Philip II of Spain, functions beyond retelling a story from mythology, by serving as a visual representation of the contemporaneous tragedy of the conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants through the themes of exposure, change, and execution.

It's Not What it Looks Like, I'm Just Sleeping

Nicholas Goodman (Mentor: Dr. Anne H. Muraoka)

Giorgione can be considered one of the most influential painters in the Venetian Renaissance. Venice was a bustling merchant city always striving towards dominance and control. In order to achieve this goal, Venice crafted a myth that separated them from the rest of the world. Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* is a perfect example of this myth creation in action. This image is typically seen as specifically designed for the male viewer. By taking into consideration the formal elements and social context at the time, this painting can be seen as a depiction of Venice and the Virgin Mary.

A Devout Balance: Vermeer's Use of Catholic Symbols in *Woman Holding a Balance*

Cassidy Crockett (Mentor: Dr. Anne H. Muraoka)

It is known that Vermeer's conversion to Catholicism had a profound effect on his life. However, his work *Woman Holding a Balance* is widely ignored in this respect. My paper addresses this gap with attention to the symbolism as a story. I will be looking at the pearls, the scene of the Last Judgment and the female figure. I argue that these specific symbols, along with others, create a story of a woman's life. In conclusion, by closely examining the symbols in this painting, I hope to shed new light on *Woman Holding a Balance* in relation to Vermeer's Catholicism.